



# Indiana Department of Education

SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

*Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Tony Bennett convened a conference call with Indiana school superintendents at 10 a.m. (EDT) on Monday, March 30, 2009 to apprise schools of the following:*

- 1) Adequate Yearly Progress – federal decision regarding the use of Fall 2008 ISTEP+ for AYP*
- 2) Timeline for public release of 2008-09 AYP determinations*
- 3) Upcoming review of Spring 2009 ISTEP+*

*A summary of the information shared by Dr. Bennett, including answers to questions posed during the call, are provided below.*

## **1) Federal decision regarding the use of Fall 2008 ISTEP+ for AYP**

Following several months of discussions, in January 2009, the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) submitted a request to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) to base final AYP decisions on the Fall 2008 ISTEP+ test and to use the Spring 2009 test for local school improvement planning and for safe harbor for the next AYP determination. On March 25, 2009, the USDOE approved that request. By basing AYP on the Fall 2008 test, and using the Spring 2009 test for planning purposes/safe harbor, schools and students won't have to wait to put plans in place and notify parents for choice, supplemental services and other school improvement activities required by law. Additionally, there will be a full year between AYP determinations, allowing improvement plans to take hold.

## **2) Timeline for releasing 2008-09 AYP determinations**

The public release of AYP determinations for the 2008-09 school year is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, April 15, 2009. All final AYP information will be provided to school superintendents in advance of the public announcement on an embargoed basis. Again, these determinations will be based solely on the fall 2008 ISTEP+ tests.

## **3) Upcoming review of Spring 2009 ISTEP+**

Following receipt of a high volume of concerns regarding the open-ended part of the Spring 2009 ISTEP+ exam, we ordered a comprehensive review of the test itself and the process leading up to it. To conduct this review, the IDOE is taking a multi-faceted approach, which includes the following elements:

- **Teacher item alignment review** – First, IDOE will undertake an additional teacher item alignment process, through which approximately 160 teachers representing students by grade level and content area will review *all* open-ended questions and all *new* multiple choice questions in the state's item pool. These individuals will be tasked with making sure that each item aligns to the standards, as well as reviewing vocabulary used in each item for grade-level appropriateness.

We are in critical need of superintendents' to help nominate high-quality teachers with a deep understanding of Indiana's academic standards to participate in the item review. We will need 160 participants for two to three days to complete this task in early-May.

Additional details, including the exact dates the review will take place and a candidate nomination form will be sent to superintendents by the end of this week. We know that the timing is ambitious, but we need to hit this timeframe so that we can make any adjustments necessary with minimal impact to the results release date.

- **Independent expert review** – Second, IDOE will engage an independent expert to review all math items (the area around which the most questions have been raised). We will publish a summary of their findings.
- **Testing vendor review** – Third, IDOE has directed our vendor, CTB, to evaluate the reading load of all operational items in each grade level in 2009 compared to the 2008 and 2007 tests. We have also asked CTB researchers to study the timing of the test to determine whether students were given adequate time to complete each section.
- **Communications practices review** – Finally, IDOE is reviewing its communication practices to ensure that all relevant audiences receive our message. While information regarding these changes was communicated to schools for a year leading up to the spring administration, we will be taking additional measures to make sure that future messages reach the most important audience: the classroom teacher.

While we wish the underlying circumstances were different, this review effort is consistent with our long-term goal of bringing complete transparency to the assessment process for ISTEP+ and beyond. It is our intention to bring assessments into the sunlight by being more diligent in our documentation and robustly communicating with all stakeholders.

## **Q&A with School Superintendents**

*The questions and answers summarized below have been combined, condensed, and reordered for sake of clarity.*

### **AYP Questions**

- **Will there be one AYP determination this school year (2008-09) or two?** There will be one AYP measure for this school year, and it will be based upon the results from the fall 2008 ISTEP+ tests.
- **What impact will the spring 2009 ISTEP+ have on AYP this year?** The spring 2009 ISTEP+ will not be factored in this year's AYP determination.
- **Will the spring 2009 ISTEP+ be used only for the Safe Harbor provision of AYP?** In addition to informing local school improvement planning, the spring 2009 test will be used solely for calculating Safe Harbor for next year's AYP determination (2009-2010 school year).
- **Can you clarify how each ISTEP+ administration will be used for AYP purposes?**
  - Fall 2008 ISTEP+: Determines school improvement status for 2009-10 school year.
  - Spring 2009 ISTEP+: Determines the basis for safe harbor for 2009-10 school year.
  - Spring 2010 ISTEP+: Determines school improvement status for 2010-11.

- **In light of the above, are we in effect skipping AYP for one year?** The U.S. Department of Education has approved Indiana's accountability proposal for transitioning from fall to spring assessment which requires using the Fall 2008 test to make the current AYP determinations and using the Spring 2010 test to make the next set of AYP determinations.
- **When will the next AYP determination occur?** After the April 15, 2009 AYP announcement, the next AYP determination is anticipated to occur in late-June 2010.
- **Where does Indiana stand as far as moving to a value-added assessment (i.e. growth model)?** A process for adding a growth model into Indiana's assessment reporting and accountability system will be presented for discussion at the State Board of Education meeting this week (April 1, 2009). We want to set an aggressive but realistic timeline for moving down this path.

### **ISTEP+ Questions**

- **Will the independent experts participating in the ISTEP+ review be from Indiana or come from outside the state?** The independent reviewers will be nationally recognized mathematics experts from outside of Indiana.
- **Will the 160 teachers participating in the ISTEP+ review be composed solely of English/language arts and math teachers or will additional perspectives (e.g. special education) be represented?** The teacher item alignment review will be representative of all students assessed, so yes, additional perspectives beyond English and math will be included.
- **How many teachers participating in the item review will come from each district and who will cover the cost?** The participating teachers will be representative of Indiana's student population based upon the nominations received from school districts. As such, there is not a set number of teachers that will come from each district. The state will cover the cost for participating teachers.
- **Can you consider adjusting the timeline for nominating teachers in light of spring break schedules?** Yes. We will be as flexible as we possibly can be without impacting the date for releasing results. [NOTE: additional details forthcoming].
- **Can you clarify the role of teachers's during the item review? Will the ISTEP+ tests change based upon their input?** Input from teachers will be considered and incorporated with the recommendations from the independent outside experts in reaching any final determinations. The purpose of the teacher item review is to make sure each item aligns to the standards and is grade-level appropriate. To be clear, this review is strictly item analysis. There will be a separate process for determining cut scores, which will also include teachers from across the state.
- **Will there be a standards-realignment now that ISTEP+ has moved to the spring to ensure teachers have already taught what's covered on the test?** The sequence in which curriculum is taught is a local decision, but IDOE will work to better communicate which

standards will be addressed on the open-ended portion of ISTEP+ during the March testing window. The multiple choice questions administered during the late-April/early-May testing window will span all standards for the given grade level and content area.

- **What steps will be taken to ensure greater alignment between ISTEP+ practice items and what is included on the actual test?** As part of our review of communications practices, we will make sure our sample test items reflect what is on the actual ISTEP+ tests.
- **What will the state do to ensure the media understands that the fall and spring ISTEP+ tests are not comparable?** Though the state cannot control how the media portrays ISTEP+ information, all state-level media messaging from IDOE will be clear on what can and cannot be compared based on the move from fall to spring testing.
- **Can local schools determine the order in which each section of ISTEP+ is administered?** No. ISTEP+ is a standardized test, and as such, the sequence in which the test is administered must be consistent across the state.
- **Who decides which standards are addressed on ISTEP+?** Indiana teachers worked with the Indiana Department of Education and the state's testing vendor to design the assessment "blueprint" that determines which standards will be tested on ISTEP+ as well as the testing window (March or late-April/early-May) during which these standards will be assessed.